



## **Best Places to Work in the Federal Government**

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The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Government Accountability Office, and Securities and Exchange Commission are the best places to work among large federal agencies, according to rankings by the Partnership for Public Service and American University's Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation.

"Best Places to Work in the Federal Government 2007" reported that the worst workplaces among large agencies in the federal bureaucracy are the Small Business Administration, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of Education.

The 2007 rankings mark the third survey of engagement and satisfaction among federal workers. When the first rankings came out in 2003, the number-crunchers had hoped to create a blueprint for government leaders to improve employee satisfaction and in turn boost recruitment of "the best and the brightest" into public work.

The results have been mixed. While the top and bottom three federal agencies remained the same in the 2007 rankings as in 2005, a handful of agencies have changed for the better. The Social Security Administration saw the biggest leap, from 21st out of 30 in 2005 to seventh this year. The Justice and Treasury departments, along with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., also showed improvement.

But some bottom feeders, such as the Department of Transportation and the National Archives and Records Administration, remained near the bottom and actually were rated worse than in the previous survey. In fact, the spread in scores between the top and bottom of the list increased by 19 percentage points. "Basically, the best are getting better, and the worst are getting worse," says Max Stier, president of the Partnership for Public Service.

Although unforeseeable events can take a toll on employee morale--the Federal Emergency Management Agency, dealt a blow by Hurricane Katrina since the 2005 rankings were released, ranked 211 out of 222 subagencies--organizations have taken steps to improve their standing among workers.

Reginald Wells, deputy commissioner for human resources at the Social Security Administration, attributes his agency's "most improved" status to changes made within the organization. Along with revamping training and embracing the electronic age, the SSA has worked to stress the importance of good leadership and give praise when praise is due, Wells says.

Always at the top of the list in improving employee satisfaction is ensuring that a worker's skills are the best match for the job. At the SSA, Wells says, that means finding people with a passion for public work and often with a knack for customer service. At all agencies, it can also mean being vigilant when recruiting. "The reality is that the government will never have problems filling these jobs," says Stier. "The challenge is getting qualified people to fill those jobs--and not just the very best, but the right talent for the need."

The Office of Personnel Management's Federal Human Capital Survey of 221,000 civil servants was used to rank 283 federal agencies and subcomponents. It asks employees about their overall satisfaction with

their job and the organization they work for, as well as whether they "recommend my organization as a good place to work."

The top small federal agencies were the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the Merit Systems Protection Board, and the Office of Management and Budget. The leading subagencies were Office of Inspector General (Treasury Department), the Environment and Natural Resources Division (Justice Department), and Region 9--San Francisco (Environmental Protection Agency).

The bottom three small agencies were the Federal Labor Relations Authority, Broadcasting Board of Governors, and U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. The subagencies ranked lowest were the Office of the Under Secretary for Science and Technology (Department of Homeland Security), Office of Postsecondary Education (Education Department), and Transportation Security Administration (Department of Homeland Security).